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Sees U.S. Prosecutor in Rome

Fugitive Ex-Agent Offers Deal

By Jim Hoagland
Washington Post Foreign Service

A former CIA operative wanted here for allegedly smuggling weapons to Libya and conspiring to kill a political rival of Col. Muammar Qaddafi met secretly with a U.S. prosecutor in Rome earlier this month and offered to arrange the kidnaping of other fugitives abroad in return for his own freedom.

The extraordinary plea-bargaining proposal was made by Edwin P. Wilson, who is under a federal indictment for activities that allegedly included supplying Qaddafi's government with explosives and recruiting former Green Berets to run terrorist schools in Libya. Assistant U.S. at-

torney E. Lawrence Barcella Jr. rejected the idea after a lengthy discussion with Wilson, informed sources said.

The meeting was held about July 10 and was made possible by a U.S. request to the Italian government to suspend the warrant that Interpol has issued for the arrest of Wilson, who registered at the Hilton Hotel in Rome on July 8, Washington Post special correspondent Sari Gilbert reported from Rome. That warrant was reactivated after Wilson returned to his exile home in Libya the following week, according to Italian police sources.

According to one version of the
See WILSON, A19, Col. 2



EDWIN P. WILSON
... fled U.S. after indictment last year

Fugitive Former CIA Agent Meets U.S. Official in Rome

WILSON, From A1

meeting that Wilson has circulated, U.S. officials initiated the discussion of his kidnaping one or more Latin Americans wanted by the U.S. government in another crime. Barcella refused to confirm or deny that he had met with Wilson, but heatedly denied that he would ever offer to make a deal based on kidnaping.

Positive identification of the potential kidnaping targets could not be made solely from the accounts available to The Washington Post, but the circumstances of the conversations with Barcella strongly suggested that the fugitives mentioned by Wilson were two Cuban exiles accused of having carried out the 1976 car-bombing assassination here of former Chilean ambassador Orlando Letelier, informed sources said. The whereabouts of the two Cubans, Jose Dionisio Suarez and Virgilio Pablo Paz, are unknown.

Barcella is the principal prosecutor in both the Letelier and Wilson cases. Wilson's lawyer, Seymour Glanzer, also represented one of the main figures in the Letelier case, Michael V. Townley, who pleaded guilty and testified against the Cubans in return for a reduced prison sentence.

Moreover, Wilson and Chile's secret police apparently recruited would-be terrorists for separate schemes from the same reservoir of Cuban exiles who first became associated with the CIA during training for the 1961 Bay of Pigs operation. One of the charges outstanding against Wilson is that he and another former Central Intelligence Agency operative, Frank E. Terpil, recruited Cuban exiles to murder Omar Abdullah Meheishi at Qaddafi's request, although the plan was never carried out.

Wilson, 52, of Upperville, Va., and Terpil, 41, of McLean, were indicted in April 1980 after a protracted investigation of the two men, who appeared to have manipulated their CIA backgrounds and connections to set themselves up in the international arms business, specializing in providing explosives and timers for bombs and terrorist training to repressive regimes abroad.

Both men fled the United States after the indictments were returned, and Wilson is known to be living in a large villa near the Libyan capital of Tripoli. Terpil was interviewed by a British jour-

nalist in Beirut three weeks ago and is presumed to be living in the Lebanese capital, although there are reliable reports that he also visited Europe this month.

Federal officials appear determined to seek the return and prosecution of Wilson and Terpil as part of an effort to determine how extensive the merchandising of covert operation skills to foreign governments and individuals has become in the wake of extensive reforms inside the U.S. intelligence community.

Barcella and the other principal prosecutor in the Wilson case, Carol E. Bruce, acknowledged that they had been out of Washington at the time that Wilson was in Rome, but said that they could provide no information on a pending case.

Interior Ministry sources in Rome confirm, however, that Criminalpol, the Italian police unit that works on international criminal matters, received a telex on July 3 suspending the arrest warrant that border police were routinely holding for Wilson.

It is unclear whether there was more than one meeting in Rome and the exact meeting place is not known, although it does appear that some U.S. Embassy personnel in Rome came to know of the session. According to one account, a U.S. official was able to persuade Wilson to let his passport be examined during the meeting and it was promptly stamped with a "canceled" notice, angering Wilson.

Wilson also used his stop in Europe to investigate the possibilities of expanding the import-export firm he says he runs in Libya into European markets, according to informed sources who speculate that the fugitive may be trying to establish a legitimate business establishment in anticipation of being able to work out a deal with the federal prosecutors.

In addition to emphasizing, as a general proposition, that he would never be party to an agreement that resulted in an illegal act like kidnaping, Barcella also stressed that any conversations entered into with a defendant by his office are only for the purpose of "moving a case along" from a stalled position.

Special correspondent Sari Gilbert in Rome contributed to this report.